the Pleiades, and *Tokowaji*, three very bright stars in a line, at equal intervals. I could not identify the last and it seems to be applied to more than one grouping. Only one star is named, *Fonjire*, the planet Venus.

The sun and moon were considered as deities or powers and were often included with the other *Zonahory* in invocations. All informants insisted that they knew no creation myth and I believe that their ignorance was genuine. I found a similar lack among their neighbors the Betsileo and can only conclude that, if such myths ever existed, they have now been completely forgotten.

CONTROL OF HUMAN AFFAIRS

The core of Tanala religion is the belief that human affairs are subject to a dual control, that of Beings and that of Fate. The two are of nearly equal importance and both good and evil may derive from either. The Beings interfere capriciously and can be influenced by prayer and sacrifice. Fate, on the other hand, is impersonal and mechanistic. It cannot be influenced by prayer or sacrifice, but its workings can be forecast and its direction changed by magical means. This basic dualism is reflected in a clear cut distinction between the activities of the priest and those of the ombiasy ("medicine-man"). The former deals only with the Beings, especially the ancestral spirits, while the latter specializes in the detection and control of Fate and has little to do with the Beings.

The interrelation between the Beings and Fate has never been clearly formulated by the natives. Priests and ombiasy whom I interrogated agreed that both derived their powers from the same source, *Zanahary*. It was *Zanahary* or the *Zanahary* (plural) who fixed the destiny of the individual at birth. Whether the ancestral spirits had any hand in shaping it was uncertain, but the majority thought not. In changing destiny *Zanahary* was appealed to, but in a formal fashion, the real efficacy lying in the magical acts accompanying the invocation. Apparently there was a feeling that the ancestral spirits could modify the destiny in minor details, but could not change it as a whole. The whole matter was very hazy in the minds of even the best instructed natives and it was clear that they had not thought about it until I questioned them.

Beings are believed to be of three sorts, a Deity or Deities, Non-Human Spirits, and Spirits of the Dead. The Deity or Deities are conceived of as first causes and sources of the power exercised by Beings of the other two categories. They are remote and shadowy

Manambo which has chased the mail carriers several times. Apparently no one has ever been caught or injured by them. 776

The *ampivavambazy* are mermaids. Three hours' march to the north of Ambohimanga there is a lake called Andravangovola Varitra which is one of their favorite haunts. On the edge of this, one sometimes sees two to four or more women sitting and working raffia or weaving. If approached, they dive into the lake and disappear. Two informants claimed to have seen them themselves. They are thoroughly human in appearance and very handsome. Four or five generations ago a man of the Zafakatsy *gens* made friends with one of them and she consented to marry him if he would never tell anyone that she was a *ampivavambazy*. She came to his village and lived there for several years, bearing him two boys and two girls. Other men in the village often asked him where she came from and envied him his handsome wife. Finally, when drunk, he told them that she was a mermaid. One of their children overheard him and came running to ask her whether it was true. She was very angry and when he returned home she told him that she was going back to her people and would take the children with her. She took the children to the lake and gave each of them a hand of bananas, telling them to dive in and eat the whole bunch under water. Two, a girl and a boy, were able to do this and she plunged into the lake, taking them with her, and never returned. The other two returned to their father, grew up and married ordinary mortals. Their descendants still live in the village and are handsome and of fine physique. 776 773

The *zimidamo ongo* are inhabitants of the under world (see Cosmology). They are like men except that their noses are set crosswise on their faces. They never visit our world. 776

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

The cult of the dead is all-important in Tanala religion. It forms a complex of interwoven beliefs and practices. The Tanala *Menabe* believe that man is composed of three parts, the body, the *aina*, and the *ambiroa*. The *aina* is the life or vital force and is identified with the breath. It has no form or consciousness and leaves the body only at death. Its fate after death is not clear in the native mind. Some informants said that it ceased to exist, others that it returned to the *Zanahary* who had given it. 774

The word *ambiroa* signifies "the second part" or "the double." The *ambiroa* has consciousness, personality and form. It is, in fact,